CHAPTER 2
Commands and the Command Voice

"The spirit of discipline, as distinct from its outward and visible guises, is the result of association with martial traditions and their living embodiment. "

B. H. Liddell Hart, Thoughts on War, 1944

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Section I
COMMANDS

2-1. General

a. A drill command is an oral order of a commander or leader. The precision with which a movement is executed is affected by the manner in which the command is given.

b. The following rules for giving commands apply to the commander when the unit drills as a separate unit and not as part of a larger formation.

(1) When at the *halt,* the commander *faces* the troops when giving commands. On commands that set the unit in motion *(marching* from one point to

another), the commander moves simultaneously with the unit to maintain correct position within the formation.

(2) When *marching,* the commander turns his head in the direction of the troops to give commands.

(3) Exceptions to these rules occur during ceremonies, which is discussed in Chapter 9.

c.　When elements drill as part of a larger unit, the rules for supplementary commands apply (paragraph 2-4).

d. The commander gives the command **AS YOU WERE** to revoke a preparatory command that he has given. The command **AS YOU WERE** must be given prior to the command of execution. The commander cannot cancel the command of execution with **AS YOU WERE.** If an improper command is not revoked, the personnel execute the movement in the best manner possible.

2-2. Two-Part Commands

a. Most drill commands have two parts: the preparatory command and the command of execution. Neither part is a command by itself, but the parts are termed commands to simplify instruction. The commands *Ready, port,* **ARMS,** and *Ready, aim,* **FIRE,** are considered to be two-part commands even though they contain two preparatory commands.

(1) The preparatory command states the movement to be carried out and mentally prepares the soldier for its execution. In the command *Forward,* **MARCH,** the preparatory command is *Forward.*

(2) The command of execution tells when the movement is to be carried out. In *Forward,* **MARCH,** the command of execution is **MARCH.**

b. To change direction of a unit when *marching,* the preparatory command and command of execution for each movement are given so they begin and end on the foot in the direction of the turn: *Right flank,* **MARCH** is given as the right foot strikes the marching surface, and *Left flank,* **MARCH** as the left foot strikes the marching surface. The interval between the preparatory command and the command of execution is normally one step or count.

2-3. Combined Commands

In some commands, the preparatory command and the command of execution are combined; for example, **FALL IN, AT EASE,** and **REST.** These commands are given without inflection and at a uniformly high pitch and loudness comparable to that for a normal command of execution.

2-4. Supplementary Commands

a. Supplementary commands are oral orders given by a subordinate leader that reinforce and complement a commander's order. They ensure proper under-standing and execution of a movement. They extend to the lowest subordinate

leader exercising control over an element affected by the command as a separate element within the same formation.

b. A supplementary command may be a preparatory command, a portion of a preparatory command, or a two-part command. It is normally given between the preparatory command and the command of execution. However, when a command requires an element of a unit to execute a movement different from other elements within the same formation, or the same movement at a different time, subordinate leaders give their supplementary commands at the time prescribed by the procedures covering that particular movement. Example The platoon is in column formation, and the platoon leader commands *Column of twos from the left* (pause), **MARCH.** The first and second squad leaders command *Forward,* the third and fourth squad leaders command **STAND FAST.** On the command of execution **MARCH,** the first and second squads *march* forward. At the appropriate time, the squad leader (third squad) nearest the moving element commands *Column half left,* **MARCH** (for both remaining squads). As the third and fourth squad leaders reach the line of march, they automatically execute a *column half right* and obtain *normal distance* behind the first and second squads.

c. A subordinate leader gives all supplementary commands over his right shoulder except when his command is based on the actions of an element on his left or when the subelement is to execute a *column left (half left)* or *left flank.* Giving commands over the left shoulder occurs when changing configuration or a formation, such as forming a file or a column of fours and *re-forming.*

NOTE: When in formation at *present arms* and the preparatory command *Order* of *Order, Arms,* is given, subordinate leaders terminate their *salute* before giving their supplementary command.

d. Supplementary commands are not given by a subordinate leader for the combined commands **FALL IN, AT EASE, REST** or for mass drill when his element forms as part of a massed formation. However, supplementary commands are given when forming a mass or when forming a column from a mass (see note following paragraph 3-3d).

e. Except for commands while in mass formation, platoon leaders give supplementary commands following all preparatory commands of the commander. When the preparatory command is *Company,* the platoon leaders immediately come to *attention* and command *Platoon.* The company commander allows for all supplementary commands before giving the command of execution.

f. When no direction is given, the response is understood to be *forward;* when no rate of march is given, the response is *quick time.* Normally, when a direction or rate of march is included in the preparatory command, only the direction or rate of march is given as a supplementary command.

2-5. Mass Commands

a. Mass commands may be used to develop confidence and promote enthusiasm. (They are definitely effective in developing a command voice when instructing a leadership course.)

b. When the instructor wants the unit to use mass commands, he commands **AT YOUR COMMAND.** The instructor gives a preparatory command describing the movement to be performed; for example, *face* the platoon to the right. The command of execution is **COMMAND.** When the instructor says **COMMAND,** all personnel in the unit give the command *Right,* **FACE,** in unison, and simultaneously execute the movement.

c. To give mass commands while *marching,* the instructor gives the preparatory command for the movement and substitutes **COMMAND** for the command of execution **MARCH;** for example, *Column right,* **COMMAND;** *Rear,* **COMMAND.**

d. Mass commands for the execution of the manual of arms are given in the same manner as described in subparagraph a-c.

e. When the instructor wants to stop mass commands, he commands **AT MY COMMAND.** The normal method of drilling is then resumed.

2-6. Directives

a. Directives are oral orders given by the commander that direct or cause a subordinate leader to take action.

b. The commander gives directives rather than commands when it is more appropriate for subordinate elements to execute a movement or perform a task as independent elements of the same formation.

c. Directives are given in sentence form and are normally prefixed by the terms **HAVE YOUR UNITS** or **BRING YOUR UNITS.** Example: **HAVE YOUR UNITS OPEN RANKS AND STACK ARMS; BRING YOUR UNITS TO PRESENT ARMS.**

d. **TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR UNITS** is the only directive on which a commander relinquishes his command and on which *salutes* are exchanged.

Section II
THE COMMAND VOICE

2-7. General

A correctly delivered command will be understood by everyone in the unit. Correct commands have a tone, cadence, and snap that demand willing, correct, and immediate response.

2-8. Voice Control

a. The loudness of a command is adjusted to the number of soldiers in the unit. Normally, the commander is to the front and center of the unit and speaks *facing* the unit so that his voice reaches everyone.

b. It is necessary for the voice to have carrying power, but excessive exertion is unnecessary and harmful. A typical result of trying too hard is the almost

unconscious tightening of the neck muscles to force sound out. This produces strain, hoarseness, sore throat, and worst of all, indistinct and jumbled sounds instead of clear commands. Ease is achieved through good posture, proper breathing, and correct adjustment of throat and mouth muscles, and confidence.

c. The best posture for giving commands is the position of *attention.* Soldiers in formation notice the posture of their leader. If his posture is unmilitary (relaxed, slouched, stiff, or uneasy), the subordinates will imitate it.

d. The most important muscle used in breathing is the diaphragm — the large muscle that separates the chest cavity from the abdominal cavity. The diaphragm automatically controls normal breathing and is used to control the breath in giving commands.

e. The throat, mouth, and nose act as amplifiers and help to give fullness (resonance) and projection to the voice.

2-9. Distinctiveness

a. Distinctiveness depends on the correct use of the tongue, lips, and teeth, which form the separate sounds of a word and group the sounds into syllables. Distinct commands are effective; indistinct commands cause confusion. All commands can be pronounced correctly without loss of effect. Emphasize correct enunciation (distinctiveness). To enunciate clearly, make full use of the lips, tongue, and lower jaw.

b. To develop the ability to give clear, distinct commands, practice giving commands slowly and carefully, prolonging the syllables. Then, gradually increase the rate of delivery to develop proper cadence, still enunciating each syllable distinctly.

2-10. Inflection

Inflection is the rise and fall in pitch and the tone changes of the voice.

a. The preparatory command is the command that indicates movement. Pronounce each preparatory command with a rising inflection. The most desirable pitch, when beginning a preparatory command, is near the level of the natural speaking voice. A common fault with beginners is to start the preparatory command in a pitch so high that, after employing a rising inflection for the preparatory command, it is impossible to give the command of execution with clarity or without strain. A good rule to remember is to begin a command near the natural pitch of the voice (Figure 2-l).

b. The command of execution is the command that indicates when a movement is to be executed. Give it in a sharper tone and in a slightly higher pitch than the last syllable of the preparatory command. It must be given with plenty of snap. The best way to develop a command voice is to practice.

c. In combined commands, such as **FALL IN** and **FALL OUT,** the preparatory command and command of execution are combined. Give these commands without inflection and with the uniform high pitch and loudness of a normal command of execution.
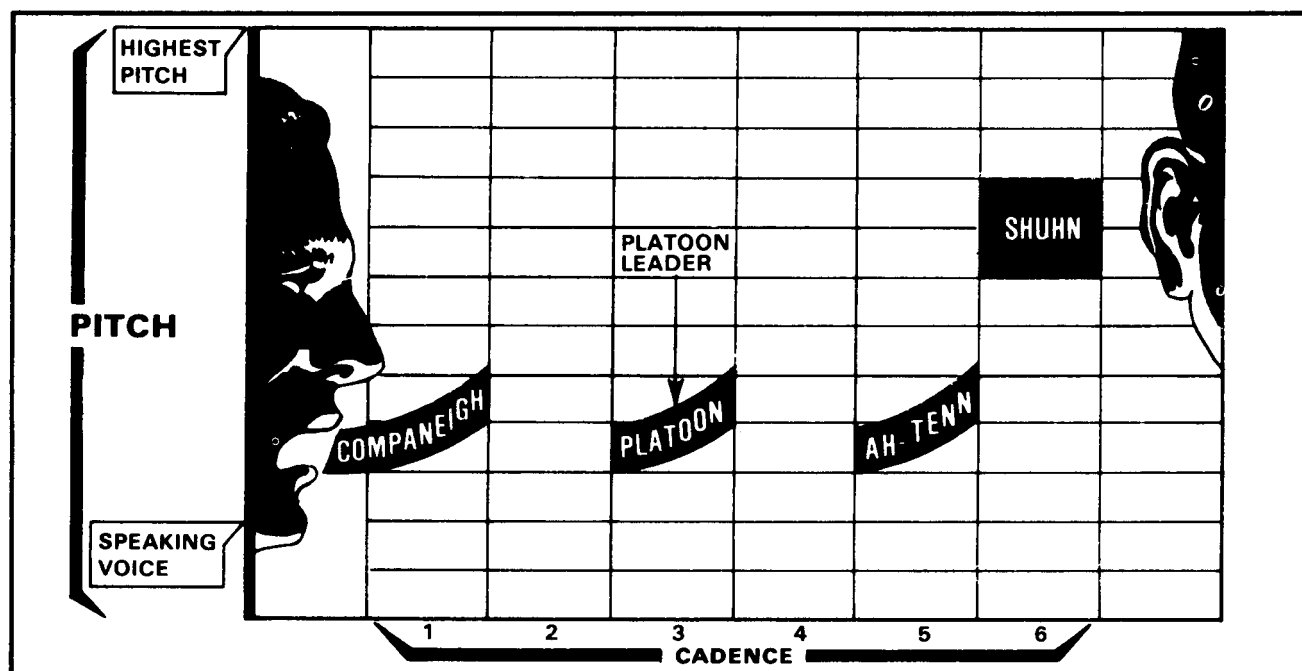
Figure 2-1. Diagram of a Command

2-11. Cadence

a. Cadence, in commands, means a uniform and rhythmic flow of words. The interval between commands is uniform in length for any given troop unit. This is necessary so that everyone in the unit will be able to understand the preparatory command and will know when to expect the command of execution. For the squad or platoon in *march,* except when supplementary commands need to be given, the interval of time is that which allows one step (or count) between the preparatory command and the command of execution. The same interval is used for commands given at the *halt.* Longer commands, such as ***Right flank,*** **MARCH,** must be started so that the preparatory command will end on the proper foot, and leave a full count between the preparatory command and command of execution.

b. When supplementary commands are necessary, the commander should allow for one count between the preparatory command and the subordinate leader's supplementary command, and an additional count after the subordinate command but before the command of execution.